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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 001554

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SUBJECT: SUDAN: RECENT SUDANESE VISITS AND CONSULTATIONS  
IN FRANCE

REF: KHARTOUM 1284

Classified By: Andrew Young, Political Counselor, 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Ghazi Salaheddin's recent consultations in Paris went well, according to MFA Sudan desk officer Thierry Caboche. Both sides "agreed to disagree" on ICC issues and focused on promoting Sudan-Chad reconciliation by trying to reduce Chadian and Sudanese support for their respective rebel allies. Darfur leader Abdulwahid el-Nur expressed strong criticism of SE Gration and said he and his associates would not participate in the rebel conference being planned for Jebel Marra. The French tried to convince GOSS President Salva Kiir's of France's interest in South Sudan and to overcome what the French see as his long-standing wariness of the French. UN-AU Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole and Hassan al-Turabi have also made recent visits to France. END SUMMARY

#### Ghazi Salaheddin Visit

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12. (C) MFA Sudan desk officer Thierry Caboche on November 20 provided an update on recent Sudan-related visits and consultations in Paris, beginning with Presidential Advisor Ghazi Salaheddin, who met with FM Bernard Kouchner and with Claude Gueant, Sarkozy's Chief of Staff, on November 12 (reftel). The visit followed earlier GOF contacts with Ghazi and a strong recommendation from the French Embassy in Khartoum that Ghazi be received at senior levels, which Paris quickly arranged. Ghazi and the French at the outset "agreed to disagree" on the ICC and neither side allowed that issue to interfere with the rest of the consultations, which consisted largely of statements of positive intentions on both sides to try to work cooperatively on Sudan's many problems. Caboche said that most of the discussion focused on ways to end Sudanese support for Chad's rebels and to end Chad's support for Darfur rebels. According to Caboche, Ghazi and his French interlocutors indicated that they would try to end support for rebels in both countries. Caboche said that France had subsequently sent a "firm message to Deby" asking him not to support the JEM.

#### Abdulwahid el-Nur

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13. (C) Having mentioned Abdulwahid el-Nur, Caboche said that Abdulwahid had consulted with the MFA on November 17. Caboche said that the meeting with Abdulwahid was neither pleasant nor productive. Abdulwahid offered strong and lengthy criticism of SE Gration and said neither he nor any of his associates would take part in the meeting of rebel factions being planned for Jebel Marra. According to Caboche, Abdulwahid said that he would "expel" any of his followers who attended the Jebel Marra meeting and would "subject them to a court-martial proceeding." Caboche said he asked Abdulwahid if "court-martial proceedings" were something that his group could carry out and Abdulwahid responded affirmatively. Caboche judged Abdulwahid was

simply blustering. Caboche said the French told Abdulwahid that France was backing the new approach SE Gration was taking. Caboche expressed frustration that Abdulwahid's position never evolved and that he refused to involve himself in the various Sudan-related fora unless everything took place on his terms, which was impossible and something he should understand by now.

14. (C) Caboche said that Abdulwahid seemed aware that his stubbornness was leading to his own isolation but that did not seem to have much effect on him. If anything, he seemed to be becoming more stubborn. Caboche said that Abdulwahid did not meet with Ghazi but did meet with Salva Kiir and with Hassan al-Turabi; Caboche said that as far as he knew, Abdulwahid's meeting with Kiir and Turabi were uneventful.

#### Salva Kiir Visit

15. (C) Caboche said that Salva Kiir's visit was strained, both substantively and logistically. Caboche said that France had extended Salva Kiir a standing invitation to visit Paris if he ever came to Europe. A visit was originally planned for July but was canceled. French interest in Salva Kiir was two-fold: first, the French wanted to overcome Salva Kiir's well-known antipathy to the French, which Caboche said dated to the early 1990s (he reportedly told a French NGO worker at the time that "Sudan doesn't need France," based largely on his perceptions of France as an African colonizer). Second, France wanted to show Kiir that it was quite interested in the North-South problem and wanted to see implementation of the CPA. Caboche acknowledged that France had not played a central role in North-South issues

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but wanted to become more involved, largely because of the effect North-South relations, and the possible secession of the South, would have on the broader region.

16. (C) France's attempts to bolster ties with Kiir were hampered by the unhelpful attitude of Kiir delegations. For a number of reasons, Kiir was unable to meet with Sarkozy or FM Kouchner; the French offered instead Claude Gueant, Sarkozy's Chief of Staff. Caboche said the Sudanese did not seem to understand Gueant's power and influence within the GOF and they sulked about not being able to see Kouchner and Sarkozy. The Sudanese proved inept at many other aspects of the visit, and Caboche himself had to make hotel, car, airport, and other logistical arrangements for them.

17. (C) Caboche provided one anecdote that he said illustrated Sudanese shortsightedness and tendency to shoot themselves in the foot. The French had arranged a meeting with the powerful MEDEF business organization. The Sudanese insisted that the meeting take place at their hotel (the ultra-pricey Meurice) even after MEDEF agreed to provide space at no cost. MEDEF agreed and had gotten about eight businessmen and potential investors to attend. The morning of the meeting, the Sudanese balked at having to pay the 1,200 Euro fee for renting meeting space at the hotel (which was charging almost that amount per night for each of the delegation's hotel rooms). They then asked MEDEF if the meeting could take place at MEDEF. MEDEF said that it could not, as its facilities were committed to other events by that time. Finally, the Sudanese relented and bought meeting space at the hotel. But because of all the confusion, only three of the eight businessmen were able to attend. Sighing, Caboche said that the South Sudanese seemed to have very little appreciation of long-term planning and priorities -- "everything with them is now, now, now," he lamented, describing Kiir and his entourage as "naively arrogant." None of these logistical snags of course did much to enhance the quality of the visit.

#### Bassole and Turabi Visits

18. (C) In passing and without elaboration, Caboche noted

the briefing on the Doha process that UN-AU Joint Chief Mediator Bassole's provided to the French on November 13. Caboche also briefly mentioned, in the context of Abdulwahid's activities, the two-week stay in Paris of Hassan al-Turabi, which Caboche said was devoted to treatment of Turabi's (unspecified) medical problems; Caboche gave no indication that Turabi was suffering from any serious medical condition.

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